

has been to us—most troubles have really been due to excessive use, for wise use demands great care and we might have been better off if DDT cost ten times more than it does; and (b) to the facility with which people may both repeat and embellish information uncritically. I am reminded of the British World War I story about the weaknesses of the field telephone. An urgent message, "Send reinforcements. We are going to advance," finished up as "Send three and fourpence. We are going to dance." That is just how information often gets transformed nowadays.

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To the Editor: Professor Thomas Jukes has been a perennial letter-writer in defense of DDT. I've never fully understood why. His facts are accurate as far as they go, but his premises and judgments can easily be debated.

The most revealing thing about Professor Jukes' letter is that he apparently does not grasp the full meaning of CALIFORNIA MEDICINE's Ecology issue. For one thing, I agree with him on the question of residue levels in human milk. I see no evidence of harm. What he overlooks however is that no one wants these residues, particularly without either control or knowledge of their intake. That is the issue. Applied toxicology is not simply an LD₅₀ extrapolated. Nor does simple arithmetic extrapolation remove the food-chain effects as in the "Sarawak" example he in effect ridicules. We do actually have DDT and a number of other residues existing in the general environment in both physical and biological components. The documentation is impressive. So also are the biotic complications, being all too slowly revealed. The suggestion is now very strong that the "threshold concept" characterizing much toxicological study and monitoring activity is an improper basis for social judgment. For too long toxicologists and biochemists have defined their studies narrowly. They should as well consider the "Uncertainty Principle" and when recommending chemical prescriptions, for whatever good purpose, incorporate the total potential of the recommendations. DDT is an excellent example of a chemical in use defined and recommended on fractional grounds.

The number of governments, national and provincial, which have banned or restricted DDT usage is increasing. No one doubts the fractional value of DDT; many doubt its value when the totality is considered.

Debate can be continued almost indefinitely. I suggest however that Professor Jukes read carefully the entire issue of CALIFORNIA MEDICINE's November issue and react as well to other "signs of the times." The current humanistic up-welling exemplified in ecological awareness is by no means casual and shallow.

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Ecological Health

To the Editor: You will recall that I had implied in my earlier correspondence with you about your September editorial that the application of your "new ethic" as a solution to the alleged overpopulation problem was anti-democratic and anti-humanitarian. And that you had implied, in your personal letter to me (10/20/70), that I had somehow misunderstood your "intent" in that editorial. But as if to verify the accuracy of my initial assessment of the ultimate implications of your ideology, and as if to answer my initial criticisms negativistically; you have subsequently pursued this same subject of "wherein lies the physician's responsibility" in the far-reaching implications of coercive population control, in your November editorial, in which you reiterate, even more strongly, the totalitarian thesis presented in your September editorial:—that the "ecological realities" will impose "further restrictions on personal freedom" (e.g., the freedom "to procreate"); that "universal compliance with certain decisions" will be necessary; that "traditional value systems" (ethics?) may need to be replaced; that some people will predictably resist these restrictions in favor of "their own ideas of freedom"; that such "emotion must be harnessed"; and finally, that physicians must prepare to "advise" patients and "even world governments" along these lines.